

Tale Feathers

February
2007

Volume 74
Number 1

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The Birds of Panama

February Joint Meeting with WGNSS

Mark your calendar for Friday, February 9 at 7:30 p.m. at the Creve Coeur Community Center.



Cana Field Station in Darien National Park, Panama, has 450 documented bird species and reports of over 200 species seen in just three days of birding. Maggie Eisenberger will present a discussion of those birds and a few of the issues that may affect their future. She spent four months at the station, including as co-manager of the facility, while working on her Master's in Tropical Ecology from the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

While many of the birds at Cana are residents and would seem to be protected in a national park, sadly they are facing obstacles similar to those of totally unprotected species around the globe. Maggie will highlight the effects of potentially completing the PanAmerican Highway as well as proposals for a natural gas pipeline and electric transmission lines. She will also discuss the research projects currently underway at Cana.

Maggie teaches high school science at Chesterfield Day School—St. Albans and recently completed her Master's in Tropical Ecology from UMSL. She is on the board of directors of Save the Rainforest and a member of the St. Louis Audubon Society. She has given many talks at the Missouri Botanical Garden on rainforest issues.

This is our annual joint meeting with the Webster Groves Nature Study Society, so you will have twice the people to meet and twice the opportunities to discover. The meeting is open to all, members or not. From I-270 and Ladue, go east on Ladue, left at the light at New Ballas, go $\frac{1}{4}$ mile north to the Creve Coeur Government Center at 300 N. New Ballas. Community Center is in the northwest corner of the lower level (closest to Olive and Ballas). Questions, call Mitch Leachman at 314-739-5112.

St. Louis Audubon Society

Opportunities

and

Announcements

Mission Statement of The St. Louis Audubon Society

Help our community
sustain biological
Diversity through
Nature.

Goals
To foster an
awareness and
understanding
Of birds and other
wildlife and their
habitats

To educate our
community so
people can make
informed decisions
about the natural
world.

Volunteer Hosts Needed at Two Rivers Refuge

Audubon members and friends might enjoy hosting at the refuge headquarters- visitors' center, located near Brussels, in Calhoun County, IL. This contribution helps the public learn more about their local wildlife refuge and how to enjoy it. Volunteer hosts spend a few hours there on a Saturday or a Sunday. They greet visitors who come by for information or the chance to look around. There are hiking trails, a wildlife observation blind, and restored prairie units close by the center. The location gives a good view of Swan Lake, plus close looks at ponds with waterfowl. Massive flocks of snow geese and white pelicans are present in season, along with Bald Eagles.

Managers of the Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge explain that the pool of volunteers who keep the center open on weekends needs expanding. Most visitors prefer to come during fall and winter months. Since many come from the St. Louis area, it would help to get more St. Louis area volunteers.

Host volunteers must sign up for specific dates and are provided a key, used to open the center. They may also have a prior orientation meeting. One or two volunteers can serve at one time, which might be morning or afternoon hours. The center closes by 4:00 p.m. Visitors sign the guest register and may take free literature, such as maps and bird checklists. To sign up or ask for information (Speak to Curt McMurl, Assistant Manager), call the Refuge headquarters on weekdays at 618/883-2524.

Turkey Count Volunteers Needed

The Missouri Department of Conservation and the Missouri Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation are conducting a study to measure daily and seasonal trends of gobbling by wild turkeys throughout the state. The purpose is to make sure that annual harvest is not occurring at a time that will interrupt breeding or nesting. The study coordinators are seeking 500 volunteers from throughout the state to help with this study by listening to and recording gobbling from 15 March through 15 May of each year from 2007 - 2011. The time investment needed would be two 20-minute counts per week (starting 15 minutes before sunrise) for the six weeks of the study each year.

Study volunteers will listen for the number of gobbles heard and the number of individual gobblers heard during a 20 minute period starting 15 minutes prior to sunrise for 2 days per week during the 6 week study.

Study volunteers should have easy access to their listening location. People are asked to volunteer only if they think that they can participate for the entire study.

Details of the study and analysis are available if you are interested. Contact, via e-mail, Jeff.Beringer@mdc.mo.gov and put the words "Gobble Study" in the subject line. Please include your name, address, and county in the e-mail. Information will be sent out via e-mail to all volunteers in January.

Birding Trips: February and March

John Solodar

Feb 3, Saturday

Riverlands. This is our annual “sleep-in-late” then go birding trip. We’ll start at 1:00PM from the Teal Pond parking lot. Connie Alwood and Josh Uffman will be the leaders for this trip. The late start will give ample opportunity late in the afternoon to look for Short-eared Owls and to check the gull roost for rarities. There should be lots of other goodies there as well with lots of duck species in residents, the harrier flock at its winter height, eagles in winter residence and some sparrows if conditions are right.

Feb 17, Saturday – Baldwin Lake/Peabody Coal Strip Mines – This trip has been very productive in the past. It’s in Illinois and starts at Baldwin Lake which is southwest of St. Louis. We often have Loggerhead Shrikes and Short-eared Owls as well as thousands of Snow Geese with Ross’ Geese tossed in for good measure. Lots of other good birds are usually seen as well. Torrey Berger was scheduled to be the leader, but he will be in Africa, so John Solodar will take over for him. Meet as described below at 9:00 AM at Baldwin Lake and plan for an all day trip although it will be easy to leave part way through if that is necessary.

March 3, Saturday – Busch Woodcock and Owl Prowl. - This trip starts at 5:00 pm and will be lead by Pat Lueders. Lots of folks turn out for this trip and we’ll try to find some owls before moving to the woodcock peenting grounds in anticipation of witnessing the courtship flights. Bring a flashlight to help find your way back to your car.

Mar 24, Saturday – Horseshoe Lake with Riverlands option – We return to our normal 8:00 am starting time for this trip. Horseshoe Lake will be the starting point and focus. Our leader will be Paul Bauer and he will lead the caravan to Riverlands (only 20 minutes away) for those who want to go on. The early migrants should be coming in and we expect to see lots of waterfowl and possibly some shorebirds as well as the usual land birds. Bring a lunch and water if you plan to go on to Riverlands.

How to get there

Baldwin Lake. Take I-270 across from Jefferson Barracks Bridge to IL. Take Hwy 3 south to Redbud. Go east on Hwy 154 to Baldwin, IL. Follow signs in town to Lake Baldwin. Meet in parking lot inside gate. The group will caravan to the Peabody Coal Strip Mines area.

Busch Conservation Area - Take U.S.40/I-64 west into St. Charles County. Take Hwy 94 south from U.S 40 about 1 mile to the traffic light at Hwy D. Turn right and go about 1.5 miles to the entrance on the right. Turn left at the “T” to Hampton Lake and meet in the parking lot.

Horseshoe Lake - Take I-70 east across Poplar Street ridge. Exit at Highway 111 (exit 6) and turn left. Go north a few miles to the Horseshoe Lake State Park entrance (on left). Meet at the first parking lot on the right.

Riverlands - Take Hwy 367 north from I-270. The designation changes to Hwy 67 just beyond the 4th traffic light, but continue. Turn right on last road just before the Clark Bridge at the Mississippi River. (Fisca gas station at this turn and also a sign for Jones Confluence Park.) Turn right on the first road and park in the Teal Pond parking lot.



Picture submitted by Dave Faintich
American Kestrel at Riverlands December 16, 2006

St. Louis Audubon Society

Field Trip Report

Saturday, November 18, 2006

To Busch CA and Weldon Spring CA (St. Charles County)

Start: 08:00 Busch CA Hampton Lake

End: 14:00 at the Blue Grosbeak Trail in Weldon Spring CA

Weather at Lambert St. Louis-Intl Airport at 04:51:
Temp 33F Hum 89% Wind W10MPH Baro 30.07
Wndchl 25F Vis 5MI Sky Fog/mist

56 species total for the day

BUSCH CONSERVATION AREA

18 birders began the day, participating in the regular field trip. John Solodar had good attendance for the beginner-birder portion and his group went their own way.

It didn't seem like a super-birdy day, especially in certain areas, but our group was fun and we enjoyed the chilly fall air, having most of Busch to ourselves. There was a function inside the HQ building, and the sizable dog-trial convention held its business elsewhere at Weldon Spring CA.

As we approached the Fallen Oak Trail we spotted a large flock of CEDAR WAXWINGS feeding (?) on the roof of the picnic pavilion. There was something there they wanted. Was it the grit of the roofing tiles?

Among today's highlights were 8 species of duck, including NORTHERN SHOVELER, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, CANVASBACK, REDHEAD, RING-NECKED DUCK, HOODED Merganser and RUDDY DUCK; 2 PIED-BILLED GREBES; 1 late GREAT EGRET; 2 TURKEY VULTURES; 1 adult BALD EAGLE; 1 good, close look at a colorful, juvenile RED-SHOULDERED HAWK; 6 late WILSON'S SNIPEs (2 at the shorebird area and 4 at lake 33); 2 BONAPARTE'S GULLs (a lifer for at least one birder); 3 BELTED KINGFISHERS;

1 YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER; 1 PILEATED WOODPECKER; 200 CEDAR WAXWINGS.

WELDON SPRING CONSERVATION AREA

Several of us continued after lunch down the Blue Grosbeak Trail. We enjoyed a handsome male NORTHERN HARRIER and an active male AMERICAN KESTREL, hunting the fields around us and favoring perches along the trail.

Sparrows included 5 AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS; 1 FOX SPARROW; 4 SONG SPARROWS; 12 WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS.

But the highlight of this walk were the 2 HARRIS'S SPARROWS, one an apparent adult and the second an immature. Both were seen along the left side of the trail, up from the parking lot and well before the fork in the trail.

DARK-EYED JUNCOs were common today but, oddly, the only White-throated Sparrows I recall were the 2 I heard at Hampton Lake parking lot.

Mike Thelen
St. Louis County, MO
jetmst@mindspring.com



White-Crowned Sparrow
Picture submitted by Mike Grant.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

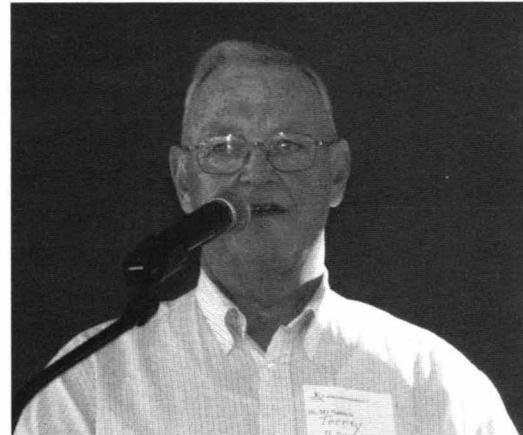
Torrey Berger

Due to some historical factor, long since forgotten, while everyone else is involved in reflecting on the past year and commencing the new, The Audubon Society finds itself right in the middle of its fiscal year. So even though we are all totaling up our year end lists of birds seen in 2006, we are right in the middle of educational, program and field trip activities at St. Louis Audubon. Some special activities which you can read more about in *Tale Feathers* or on our website are the up-coming Eagle Days, at Chain of Rocks Bridge; The Great Backyard Birding Festival at the Missouri Botanical Gardens and, a little later in the year, The Wings of Spring Confluence Birding Festival at Riverlands. Of course, these are in addition to our usual field trips and member programs.

Even though it is only mid-year for us, it is not too early to be thinking about our year end annual awards banquet, at which we will honor an outstanding wildlife conservation educator and outstanding natural resource Legislator, a conservationist of the year, a St. Louis Audubon Volunteer and possibly a natural resource lifetime achiever. If you would like to nominate someone for any of these awards, please contact Lynne Breakstone at breaksl@artsci.wustl.edu, Julie Leeman at jleeman@earthlink.net, or me at jberger@lewisrice.com. A full description of each award and its criteria can be found on our website.

Happy New Year and good birding to all for calendar year 2007!

Torrey Berger



Torrey Berger speaking at Annual dinner.

Many Apologies to our members for the late arrival of our last newsletter.

We experienced a number of delays with confirmation of dates, printing and of course the weather.

Also, The Holiday Party was cancelled due to the lack of Electricity caused by the powerful Ice storm. The party was NOT re-scheduled.

Thank-you for your understanding!

SAVE THE DATE: BIRDING FESTIVAL FEBRUARY 4 AT MISSOURI BOTANTICAL GARDEN

The Missouri Botanical Garden will be hosting their second Birding Festival on February 4, 2007 at the Garden. St. Louis Audubon will be leading bird walks through the garden. In addition, there will be workshops for adults, families, and children. Booths will be providing information on all aspects of birds, especially feeding and watching them. Participants will be encouraged to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count sponsored by Cornell University. Mark your calendar! For more information visit www.stlouisaudubon.org or www.mobot.org.

How to See Smith's Longspurs

Dency Kahn

It began with a posting on MO-BIRDS of an upcoming Burroughs Audubon field trip with its target birds: Smith's Longspurs, Long-eared Owls, Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcon, Neotropic Cormorant and other waterfowl. Next Susan Hazlewood gave a strong recommendation for this trip for people wishing to see Smith's Longspurs, seconded by Bob Fisher. I must admit that up to this point I was just glancing at the messages, thinking they did not concern me. But then I received a message from Dave Faintich, asking who of his circle of birding buddies would be interested in going. And so it was that on Friday, November 10th, three St. Louis birders, Dave, myself and Johanna Shipley, set out for Olathe, KS.

We stayed at the Holiday Inn in Olathe since that was the 7:00 a. m. starting point for the trip. Dave had contacted Matt Gearheart, the trip leader, to tell him we were planning on coming. This is an all-day trip, going to 5:00 p.m., and since we planned to bird on our way back, we spent 2 nights in Olathe. In addition to us, there was a couple from Topeka and 3 birders from Columbia as well as Burroughs Audubon members, and we were told that Iowans have attended in the past as well.

I learned that Smith's Longspurs winter only in fields with 3-awn grass. As far as I know, no such fields are near St. Louis. When we reached the field, we spread out and began walking, with the goal of flushing the longspurs. A flock of 40 to 50 longspurs responded. I also enjoyed seeing Harris's Sparrow, which I don't see every year, Long-Eared Owls, and Harland's Red-tailed Hawks, more common west of St. Louis. On our way home we stopped at the Headquarters Building of Eagle Bluffs CA, and I was lucky enough to see a bobcat cross the road for a life view.

Every year this trip has turned up a rarity. One year it was a Gyrfalcon, another time it was a Neotropic Cormorant, which was hoped for again. But this year we were instead treated to a Black-legged Kittiwake at the John Redmond Reservoir spillway.

I am not going to assume any longer that trip announcements of other chapters don't concern me. Instead I am going to look at them and ask myself if I want to go too. If I do, I will try to find a small group of birding buddies of like mind to go with, and I will see new country and new or slightly different birds, and I will have the same good times that I have with St. Louis Audubon Society trips. Try this yourself!



Black-Legged Kittiwake seen at the John Redmond Reservoir Spillway
Picture submitted by Dave Faintich

A Sign from Zeus

By Eric B. Jeltes

When I crawled out of bed New Year's morning when my son was up before the crack of dawn, I discovered something in my backyard that I never would have expected.

I live in south Saint Louis city, and for the most part as far as bird watching is concerned, it is the usual suspects day in and day out.

Cardinals, Blue Jays, Dark-Eyed Juncos (in winter), Robins, European House Sparrows, European Starlings, the occasional Downey Woodpecker, etc. thrive around my modest gingerbread house with a postage stamp yard (29 cents).

As I lifted my first cup of coffee with great effort I noticed that there was an object of great size flying over by backyard (much bigger than what would normally be in my airspace). Since I didn't have my contact lenses in yet, while still feeling rather groggy, the possibility of this object being a UFO or Superman was not entirely out of the question. Whipping out my holstered binoculars with the skill and precision that my old drill sergeants would be proud of (while holding my Not-Gonna-Sit-Still-Must-Grab- Everything 9 month old son) to get a better look at the thing that was causing me to move much too quickly way too early in the morning turned out to be an adult Bald Eagle. At first I thought it to be a sign from Zeus atop Mount Olympus that I would be going on a heroic journey on a swift ship fraught with danger and evil beasts. Turns out that there wasn't a snake impaled upon the great bird's talons. Sadly, it was not a sign and I again reached for my coffee. The bird was, however, very excellent as I watched it fly off over my neighbor's roof. I have seen many eagles in my day, but I never expected to watch one from my sun porch!

Caffeine injected, contact lenses in place, and an hour later a flock of snow geese numbering about 200 were flying high over my airspace. This too was a first for my backyard. Then a Kestrel exploded up the alley after a sparrow (sadly for the Kestrel he missed, but a Happy New Year for the sparrow), and a Red-Tailed Hawk was perched conspicuously in a distant sycamore, both also unusual. As the geese honked to each other and headed toward the river I thought about some of the other unexpected visitors to my humble urban yard over the last several years. Coopers Hawks, Veery, Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds, Eurasian Tree Sparrows, a rather concerned and lost looking Le Conte's Sparrow, and Common Yellow Throat Warblers have all made appearances at one time or another. Perhaps the eagle was a different kind of sign? Or perhaps more coffee?

Editor's Note: Eric Jeltes is the newest member of the St. Louis Audubon Society Board of Directors

Tale Feathers

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St. Louis Audubon Society 2006 - 2007

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Your membership dues will go directly to the St. Louis Audubon Society. Your membership dues support local issues that are important to you, programs at our general meetings, and *Tale Feathers*, our newsletter.

Dues are \$15.00 per year and cover all members living at the same address.

Please complete the form, enclose a check payable to SLAS, and mail to:

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